

that taxpayers do not deserve and Congress must stop.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the budget. One of Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet we are in the final month of the year, and Congress still has work to do on 11 of the 12 annual spending bills. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling all these bills into one monstrous piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and porkbarrel spending.

This is not what Congressional leaders promised when they took control of the Congress at the start of the year. In January, one congressional leader declared, "No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol, while families in America struggle to get ahead." He was right. Congressional leaders need to keep their word and pass the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way.

The end of the year is approaching fast, and Americans are working hard to finish up their business. Yet when it comes to getting its business done, Congress is only getting started. Members of Congress now have only a few weeks left before they head home for the holidays. Before they do so, I urge them to do their job: fund our troops; protect our citizens; provide taxpayers relief; and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on November 30 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 1. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 30 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on Congressional Action on the Legislative Agenda

December 3, 2007

Good morning. Congress returns from its 2-week Thanksgiving break today. They have just 2 weeks to go before they leave town again. That's not really a lot of time to squeeze in nearly a year's worth of unfinished business.

In fairness, Congress was not entirely out over the past 2 weeks. In a political maneuver designed to block my ability to make recess appointments, congressional leaders arranged for a Senator to come in every 3 days or so, bang a gavel, wait for about 30 seconds, bang a gavel again, and then leave. Now, under the Senate rules, this counts as a full day. If 30 seconds is a full day, no wonder Congress has got a lot of work to do.

Congress needs to start by passing a bill to fund our troops in combat. Beginning in February, I submitted detailed funding requests to Congress to fund these operations in the war on terror. Yet some in Congress are withholding this funding because they want to substitute their judgment for that of our military commanders. Instead of listening to the judgment of General Petraeus, they are threatening to withhold money he needs unless they can mandate an arbitrary date of withdrawal.

This month, more of our troops will return home as a result of the success we're seeing in Iraq. People are coming home. For Congress to insist on setting an arbitrary date for withdrawal would put the gains General Petraeus and our troops have made in danger—and that would threaten the security of our country. It's unconscionable to deny funds to our troops in harm's way because some in Congress want to force a self-defeating policy, especially when we're seeing the benefits of success.

Secretary Gates and other senior Pentagon officials say the delay in our funding will mean this for our military: Unless Congress acts, the Defense Department will soon be required to begin giving layoff notices to about 100,000 civilian employees. Unless Congress acts, the military task force developing ways to better detect and protect our troops from roadside bombs will run out of money by early next year. Unless Congress acts, the Army will run out of operations and maintenance money in February. Unless Congress acts, the Marine Corps will run out of similar funds in March.

Earlier this year, congressional leaders were trying to impose conditions on funds because they said our strategy in Iraq was not working. We changed our strategy, and

now even many of those who initially opposed the surge acknowledge that it is achieving results. It is time for Members of Congress to meet their responsibility to our men and women in uniform, and they should stay in session until they pass these emergency funds for our troops.

Second, Congress needs to make sure our intelligence professionals can continue to monitor terrorist communications. In August, Congress passed legislation to help modernize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. That bill closed critical intelligence gaps, allowing us to collect important foreign intelligence information about terrorist plots. The problem is, the new law expires on February 1st, while the threat from the terrorists does not expire.

The Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has warned that unless the FISA reforms in the act are made permanent, our national security professionals will lose critical tools they need to protect our country. Instead of listening to the judgment of Director McConnell, some in Congress now want to restrict the intelligence tools that help keep the American people safe. They are blocking efforts to provide meaningful liability protection to those companies now facing multibillion dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in our efforts to defend our Nation following the September the 11th attacks. Congress must stop this obstruction and make certain our national security professionals do not lose a critical tool for keeping our country safe.

Third, Congress needs to act immediately to prevent the Alternative Minimum Tax from hitting more Americans this year. The AMT was enacted in 1969 to ensure that a few hundred wealthy individuals paid their fair share of taxes. But when Congress passed the AMT, it was not indexed for inflation. As a result, the AMT's higher tax burden is being imposed on more and more middle class families.

Last month, Treasury Secretary Paulson wrote a letter to Members of Congress warning them about this: that if they put off an AMT fix, it could delay the delivery of about \$75 billion worth of tax refund checks. Yet instead of listening to Secretary Paulson's warning, Congress continues to delay action.

The longer Congress delays action, the longer Americans will wait—likely wait to get their tax refund checks next year.

If Congress fails to act, as many as 25 million Americans would be subject to AMT. On average, these taxpayers—many of them middle class families—would have to send an extra \$2,000 to the IRS next April. At a time when many Americans are struggling with home mortgages and health care costs, the last thing they need is for Congress to stick them with an additional tax increase.

Finally, Congress has important work to do on the Federal budget. One of the Congress's most basic duties is to fund the day-to-day operations of the Federal Government. Yet only 1 of the 12 spending bills has made it into law. Congressional leaders are now talking about piling the remaining bills into one monster piece of legislation, which they will load up with billions of dollars in earmarks and wasteful spending. Now is not the time to burden our economy with wasteful Washington spending that will lead to higher taxes. Congressional leaders need to do their job and pass the remaining spending bills in a fiscally responsible way. And if they send me an irresponsible spending bill, I will veto it.

The end of 2007 is approaching fast, and the new Congress has little to show for it. I call on Members to use the time left to support our troops and to protect our citizens, prevent harmful tax increases, and responsibly fund our Government.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

Remarks at the Children's Holiday Reception

December 3, 2007

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. I've got two jobs. One is to introduce you to my wife, Laura, and two is to tell you how much we admire your moms and dads, how much we appreciate their service to our country.